

Civic Engagement Update

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Contribute to the Civic Engagement Updates

Share your success stories and pictures with the rest of the WSC! Do you have tips on the CE process? We want to hear them! Please send all stories, pictures, tips, and suggestions to Donna Olson at dolson@esd.wa.gov.

Publicity, the Media, and Civic Engagement



Working to get publicity for your civic engagement

project is a valuable way to showcase your AmeriCorps project, the youth impact and involvement, as well as educate the larger community about identified issues. It is also a good opportunity to provide members with training on working with the media and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has a toolkit to support this training.

This project should primarily be member or youth driven, however Project Supervisors should assist members with these efforts by helping them

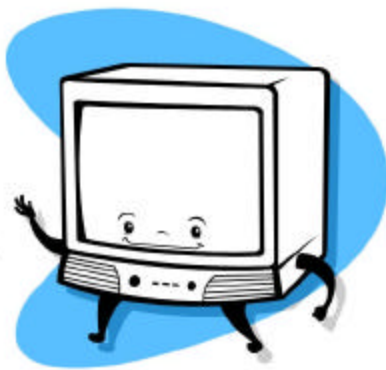
utilize resources at the WSC and educating them about appropriate protocol and process.

All news-worthy happenings of the WSC (including CE projects) should be sent to Program Coordinators, who can then forward the information to Sheryl Baker, the media liaison for the WSC, and Caitlin Cormier, our media contact within the Employment Security Department. These efforts should not supplant member or youth driven publicity for CE projects, but they can complement them and allow your publicity efforts to reach a wider audience.

Posters, flyers, word-of-mouth, and local news outlets are all good ways

to publicize a project locally, and ESD can assist by publicizing through larger media outlets. Since media contact lists, press release templates, and other machinery to help publicize events already exist within ESD, this extended publicity can be accomplished readily.

If you would like to have your project publicized through the WSC and ESD, please contact your Program Coordinator.



ESD 112 Members Write Haiku Poetry about Civic Engagement

Although reflection is built into the *Roadmap*, utilizing additional reflection tools can enhance members' experience with the curriculum. The ESD 112 WRC team writes haiku after completing *Roadmap* units as an additional reflection piece.

Haiku is a kind of Japanese poetry that has developed over many centuries. American haiku is traditionally split into three lines, with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in

the second, and 5 in the third. Although traditional Japanese haiku usually explored topics relating to nature and was an extremely formalized type of poetry, modern haiku has become increasingly informal and topics range from technology to pop culture (and now, civic engagement).

The haiku written by the ESD 112 team all relate to civic engagement but explore different aspects of CE, such as unit subjects or the nature

of civic engagement itself. Several of ESD 112's haiku are highlighted throughout this CE Update.

Individuals

Ones gather to become one

A community

~ Haiku by ESD 112 member

Maintaining Youth Voice and Ownership Throughout the Roadmap Process

In November's CE Update there was a summary of the CE workshops offered at the October SERVES. It concluded with the ideas on maintaining youth voice discussed during the member session focused on facilitating the *Roadmap* with youth. These ideas included:

- Keep facilitator's personal opinion to a minimum, if shared at all.
- Make it known that you are there for the youth.
- Help forward youth voice; follow-up may happen later (a project or community need addressed). Be an ally for youth with people who have power when necessary.
- Let the youth talk. Sometimes pause to allow for silence and other voices.
- Let the youth know that they will be doing their project.

These thoughts from members are all good specific ways to maintain youth voice throughout the CE process. In addition to those ideas, it can be helpful to keep a few general guidelines in mind when facilitating the *Roadmap* with youth.

The Washington Youth Voice Project published four Principles of Youth Voice in 1997. In this update the Principles will be related specifically to the *Roadmap*.

Respect: You give it; you receive it. Mutual respect and an appreciation for each member's contributions to the partnership are vital.

It is crucial to set the tone for a mutually respectful environment from the very beginning of the *Roadmap* process. This can be done by emphasizing that facilitators will also be bound by the community agreements established by the group. Facilitators can also create and share a set of "facilitator ground rules" that will establish how they will treat the youth throughout the process. By beginning the process with transparent guidelines, youth will be able to see that they will be *given* respect, not just expected to *give* respect.

Cooperation

Open heart and open mind

Team work means results

~ Haiku by ESD 112 member

Communication: Listen up. An honest and open exchange of ideas is crucial.

Facilitators should be as open about the *Roadmap* process as possible, explaining why the curriculum is being facilitated the way that it is. When facilitators are straight forward and explain why things are being done a certain way, youth are more likely to buy into the process.

It can be difficult to ensure that *all* youth are being heard throughout the CE process. For some specific suggestions related to that aspect of open communication, see the SERVES Café Summary on page 4.

Investment: It takes time. Investing in the future is accepting young people as leaders today.

The *Roadmap* is all about giving youth skills and support to become leaders. It's important to remember that throughout the process youth should be increasingly given more responsibility. This is particularly important during project planning. Facilitators can encourage youth by admitting that they are still learning as well, i.e. by learning how to do something related to project planning *with* the youth instead of learning about it and then telling the youth how to do it.

Meaningful Involvement: Count us in. Decisions about young people should be made with young people.

Many of the decision-making processes throughout the *Roadmap* are already designed to be youth driven. When establishing a CE youth group it is important to keep this principle in mind. Sometimes youth will not be given a choice as to whether they are participating in the process. Addressing that from the beginning can make a difference in how the process develops. A discussion about this could follow the "How'd That Happen?" lesson in Unit 1. Facilitators could ask participants who were not given a choice about participating in the *Roadmap* process what they *do* have a choice about regarding CE, i.e. how they are going to participate in the process.

Reminders

- ◆ Please use the *Roadmap* Adaptation Submission Form when getting WSC Program Coordinator approval for alternative activities not already in the *Roadmap*.
- ◆ Youth partners should be identified as soon as possible if they are not already.
- ◆ Resources created for the CE Atlas will be available by email request. Please email Donna Olson (dolson@esd.wa.gov) if you would like to request copies of upcoming resources available. The topics covered first will be finding and working with a youth partner and acquiring funding and supplies.

Scheduling CE: Member Facilitation and Project Planning

There are a variety of methods used for scheduling member facilitation of the *Roadmap*. These primarily fall into two categories: a CE Camp of about 2 days or utilizing ongoing team meeting days to facilitate the curriculum.

The CE Camp method provides a quick way to deliver the curriculum and, particularly if done as a retreat, can offer members additional team-building time. However, since the curriculum often repeats important ideas to maximize retention for the middle-school age developmental stage, facilitating in this way can highlight the repetition.

Utilizing team meeting days to facilitate one or two units per day doesn't highlight the repetition as much, but it also takes more training and/or meeting time.

When scheduling CE during team meetings, some teams schedule one unit per day and spend the rest of the day doing other things.

Alternatively, CE units can be

scheduled so that two units are facilitated during one meeting day. This will shorten the total time it takes to finish the curriculum.

When considering whether to facilitate multiple units in a single day, it's important to consider the length of time needed to thoughtfully facilitate the curriculum and come to a decision. For instance, although Unit 6 is only scheduled to take 90 minutes, choosing a single project may take longer, particularly with a large team.

Once Unit 6 facilitation is completed, it's time to plan the project. This may take longer than the time allotted during the second half of Unit 6 depending on the size of the project members choose. Establishing a clear schedule for project planning and making time constraints transparent to members at the beginning of Unit 6 can help ensure that members choose a project that is feasible.

Many Project Supervisors choose to schedule projects in advance for specific service-oriented days throughout the year, including Make a Difference Day in October or Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January. Time available for project planning is less flexible by scheduling projects this way and can help members directly relate the CE process to their service.

Alternatively, projects can be scheduled after they've been chosen by members. This can give more flexibility to scheduling project planning time.

Scheduling member facilitation is unique to each team, and each team should do what works best for them.

**Transposed values of
Forefathers appropriated
Through our direction
~ Haiku by ESD 112 member**

Finding Youth Participants and Generating Enthusiasm about CE

One of the innate responsibilities to facilitating the *Roadmap* with youth is finding a youth group interested in participating in the curriculum. Sometimes this is an opportunity to build a partnership with a group of youth already formed (i.e. leadership class; Boy or Girl Scout troop; or already formed after-school program). Other times this means seeking out a new partner to support the program.

Whether participants are in a group that's already been formed or not, it can be challenging to consistently maintain youth enthusiasm and attendance.

Youth partners can assist in a variety of ways. For instance, if the youth partner is a school, members can ask if participants could receive extra credit. Youth partners can also help promote the program with their youth members by announcing CE

in organizational newsletters or posting flyers.

One creative way used to help find participants that simultaneously helped generate enthusiasm for the process was publicizing participation as a privilege. Youth applied to participate and wrote why they wanted to join the CE group.

Other ways to maintain youth enthusiasm have included adding additional ice-breakers and games to unit facilitation and encouraging youth to bring their friends. Some teams use phone calls or letters home to increase attendance and others utilize a variety of incentives for participation, i.e. snacks, giveaways of small items, or other privileges.

Many teams also change the schedule to better maintain youth enthusiasm and attendance. Sometimes this is done to fit better

with youths' schedules, and other times members thought it would keep enthusiasm higher to adjust the schedule slightly. To vary the schedule, sometimes teams space out units more and intersperse unit facilitation with other activities (i.e. smaller service projects or homework help days). Other teams find that with too much space between aspects of the curriculum youth are likely to lose interest.

Finding youth participants and maintaining enthusiasm can be challenging, but utilizing a combination of these methods and others can encourage youth to participate and stay engaged in the process.

If you have best practices for how you have kept youth attendance consistent or enthusiasm high, please forward them on and we will publish some of your ideas.



What was discussed during the Roadmap Café at SERVES? (Part 2)

A summary of the discussion during the *Roadmap Café* at SERVES was begun in the November CE Update. Covered in the first part of the Café summary were the first three questions discussed:

- **What does it mean to be civically engaged?**
- **Is civic participation a duty or a choice?**
- **How did our society come to the point of seeming to have so little engagement?**

An old wooden house
A team speaks a truth
Unity! Silence again
~ Haiku by ESD 112 member

The summary will continue with the next question raised by Café participants:

How can we help people become aware of the choice to be engaged or not?

The first thing discussed were the already established "Vote for Me" campaigns, where children ask their parents not planning on voting to cast the vote that they would cast if they were legally able. Participants also discussed the idea of having incentives or penalties for voting, such as offering a tax break for voting or requiring non-voters to pay higher taxes. This related back to the discussion about whether civic participation is (or should be) a duty or a choice. It was noted that even if a measure didn't get passed, opening a debate about

such incentives or penalties would at least start a conversation on the issue.

How can we encourage educated and informed engagement?

The first suggestion made was to encourage parents or guardians of youth participants to help out with the CE project in some way.

Wrapping up this portion of the discussion was the admission that it can be easy to believe that many people don't want to be engaged. It seemed more likely to Café participants that more people *wanted* to be engaged and didn't know *how*. It was also noted that it can be difficult to let engagement activities start small and grow over time, but it's important to realize that small successes are still successes.

How can we empower youth and encourage youth voice?

The first point made was that as facilitators, it is important to be excited about the process instead of specific needs or issues. This was summarized as a "guide without influencing" mentality.

It was noted that one of the largest challenges to encouraging all youth to participate fully is the need to fit in, a challenge that is particularly pertinent with middle-school aged youth. It was suggested that establishing a safe space during Unit 1 becomes more important as youth begin discussing ideas they may be passionate about. A "Review/Preview" idea was also suggested, where each CE session would start with a review of previously covered material and end with a

preview of what's coming ahead. This can give additional think time to youth who need it.

One specific brainstorm was related to the Unit 5 needs debate. At the end of Unit 4, youth could all be asked to write down their opinions of the two top needs identified. This could be done as an extension of the reflection activity. Facilitators could then type the list and have one or two of the youth read it before beginning the debate during Unit 5. In this way, all youth would be given a voice, and since the list would be typed there wouldn't be a danger of the youth reading the list aloud recognizing anyone's handwriting.

Another challenge mentioned was that individual passions may get lost in the group process. One or two youth may be extremely committed to a specific need or project, and the Café participants wanted to discuss how to support such youth when the need or project they are passionate about isn't chosen by the group.

It was suggested to talk with the youth and encourage them to view the group project as a skill-building process so that they can then go out and do something about the need they are passionate about. It was also noted that the facilitating members could offer additional guidance after the CE process to that youth to help them complete another project as the member's time allows.

The Café concluded at this point, and the members expressed a renewed enthusiasm for the CE process and the *Roadmap*.